

How to Write a Letter to Your Member of Congress

Well-written letters from their constituents can have a big influence on legislators' priorities and decisions. Just a couple of personal letters into an office over a short period of time can bring an issue to the attention of your legislator and have a big impact.

Follow these simple steps to ensure your letter is as effective as possible:

1. **Make it personal.** This is far and away the most important tip. Tie the issue to your personal expertise or experience. If you don't have a personal story, explain why the issue is relevant to the district or state. Use your own words. If you have professional expertise on the issue, be sure to describe it.
2. **Address only one issue per letter.** Different staff deal with different issues.
3. **Lead with a specific request.** Ask the legislator to take a particular action, such as cosponsoring, supporting or opposing a bill or taking a leadership role on an issue. Ask the legislator to state his or her position in a letter of response.
4. **When appropriate, express your appreciation.** Like anybody, legislators appreciate an occasional "well done." Furthermore, in this manner you signal that you are paying attention to your legislator's activities.
5. **Write to your own members of Congress.** Members ignore letters from people who are not their constituents. You can find your representative [here](#), or if you think you know which district you are in, following the directions on the legislator's website will ensure your letter goes to the right person.
6. **Consider mailing a paper letter.** If a vote is coming up in the next couple of weeks, an emailed letter, submitted through the

form on the member's website, is best. But if you have time (remembering that mail to Congress is slow as it is checked for Anthrax in the Midwest), snail mail can be more effective as it is more personal. Be sure to include your return address.

7. **Follow up.** Follow-up letters with a call to the lawmaker's office to be sure they received the letter. Go a step further and ask for an in-person meeting to discuss your letter with the elected official.

Sample Letter to the Editor Opposing Forced Arbitration:

Reports show Wells Fargo customers have been trying to sue over fake accounts since 2013. But because the bank's lawyers buried "ripoff clauses" in the fine print of their contracts, customers were denied their day in court and forced into secretive arbitration proceedings – while Wells Fargo continued stealing from its customers for another three years.

Members of Congress loudly – and appropriately – condemned Wells Fargo's fraud. But what are they doing about it?

Last week, Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) introduced the Justice for Victims of Fraud Act to ensure consumers can challenge bank fraud in open, public court. The bill works hand-in-hand with a new rule proposed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). While the bill would remedy specific past abuses, the CFPB rule restores customers' ability to join together to challenge fraud and creates a public record of arbitration claims and outcomes to help expose scandals like Wells Fargo before they become so widespread.

But Senator ____ and their fellow Republicans have not pledged support for either of these critical measures. To stand up for the people over Wall Street banks, Senator ____ must support both the Justice for Victims of Fraud Act and the CFPB rule.